

Is Every Breach of Every Agreement "Unjust"?

Post by "Cassius" of October 19, 2019 at 4:55 PM

Lots of good stuff to discuss there:

[Quote from Todd](#)

The Epicurean by-the-book, but not overly helpful, answer is: we define justice in such a way as to maximize our pleasure.

Todd I am not sure that this is obviously the case. Epicurus referred to justice as an agreement to avoid harm, but does that necessarily mean it is the inverse -- to maximize pleasure? As you observe later in the post justice is a small part of a circle encompassing "pain." Does reducing pain in that area necessarily lead to maximized pleasure? I will have to think further about that.

[Quote from Todd](#)

I tend to prefer rules-based definitions,

And rules based definitions may be exactly what Epicurus is saying is NOT possible in referring to true justice. Rules are patterns that are "set in stone" regardless of circumstances - and is not Epicurus saying that circumstances are everything in regard to justice?

[Quote from Todd](#)

This is why I think rules-based definitions of justice are useful - because they're easier to agree on

Yes they may be easier to talk about, but as above, if the circumstances change so that the agreement is no longer of advantage to both in avoiding harm, then the "justice" automatically dissolves.

[Quote from Todd](#)

but I would like to point out that using pain alone as a gauge of injustice might involve practical difficulties.

Here is the practical difficulty that I was really thinking about in distinguishing pain from harm. The surgeon who cuts off our leg causes great pain in the short term, but saves our life in the long term. We frequently choose pain when it avoids worse pain and leads to greater pleasure. So I am not sure it is easy to say that "pain" alone is the appropriate trigger, and this may be why Epicurus used (if he did) "harm" rather than "pain."

[Quote from Todd](#)

his is much easier if the third party has basically similar ideas of what is just and unjust.

I marked this one for comment but it is basically the same issue. Are our "ideas" of just and unjust (which as you say or imply is what we reduce to "rules") the key, or is it the "feeling" which is key, and which is transient?

I think your reasoning is very helpful in walking through this, as it is what we all need to do. I am just not sure that we can square rules-based reasoning with what Epicurus is saying, as what is is doing may amount to the explicit rejection of rules-based analysis (to be replaced with "feeling-based" recognition that "justice" has no absolute meaning whatsoever.

Just thinking out loud here! 😊